

Connecticut Commission On Educational Achievement



February 28, 2011

To The Education Committee:

The Connecticut Commission on Educational Achievement, a bipartisan group of 11 business and philanthropic leaders, issued a report in October on ways to close Connecticut's achievement gap. As a member of the Commission and a participant on the recent School Finance Ad-Hoc Committee, I am writing to express my thoughts on the Governor's bill HB 6385.

As a person who has studied the issue of school finance for years, I am thrilled to see that the Governor is focusing on the Education Cost Sharing grants (ECS). For far too long, we have allowed a broken system of school finance to exist, which has resulted in many students not having access to the resources they need simply because they live in the wrong zip code. I applaud Governor Malloy for addressing the ECS formula in his first budget address. As promised, he is making this a priority.

After spending the better part of a year on the former School Finance Ad-Hoc Committee, I think it is important that the new task force build from the work of this committee and use the core values they agreed upon as the starting point for truly reforming ECS. However, I do have a concern about the composition of the task force proposed in Section 14 of HB 6385. Many of the proposed members of the new task force played a large role in the last committee and are key stakeholders in the process.

We need to diversify the new task force to include people who do not have a direct stake and who do have a background in public finance and an understanding of state funding formulas. I believe unbiased expertise on the issue and a perspective that is informed by experience beyond Connecticut could greatly enhance work of this new task force.

Lastly, we have been talking and meeting about this broken system long enough. The proposed task force needs to move beyond theory and produce a clear, detailed and specific plan for implementation so we can get started on overhauling ECS as soon as possible..

Sincerely,

Dudley Williams
101 Dogwood Lane
Stamford, CT 06903
203-962-7445

505 Hudson Street; 2nd Floor
Hartford, CT 06106
<http://ctcommissionachieve.org>